Health and Medical Disaster Response: Lessons Learned

The Houston Katrina and Rita Experience

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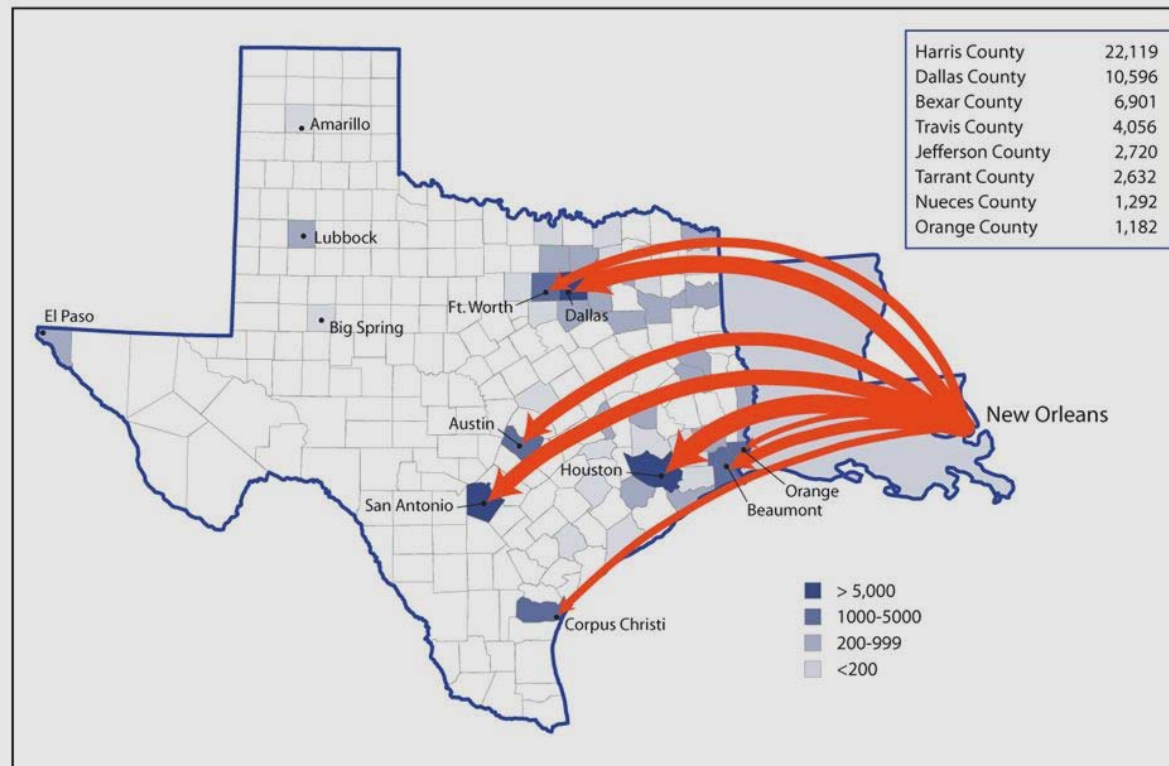City of Houston Department of Health & Human Services

Two Responses

- Hurricane Katrina

  – Caring for Louisiana evacuees

- Hurricane Rita

  – Re-evacuation of Louisiana evacuees

  – Evacuation of general population

  – Caring for all evacuees

  – Recovery

Texas Sized Response

- Katrina

  - 450,000-475,000 evacuees in Texas hotels motels & shelters

  - 66,000 in 180 shelters

  - Evacuees land in 202 of 254 Texas counties

- Rita

  - 3.2 million evacuees

  - 115,000 in 468 shelters

Katrina Evacuees Went to More than 200 Texas Counties

Harris County	22,119
Dallas County	10,596
Bexar County	6,901
Travis County	4,056
Jefferson County	2,720
Tarrant County	2,632
Nueces County	1,292
Orange County	1,182

Conventional Wisdom Does Not Apply

"Never, ever, think outside the box."

Six Basic Principles

- Learn to Say No

- Create a Book of Lists

- Leverage the Private Sector

- Emphasize Human Services in Health & Human Services

- Integrate Emergency Response Into the Day-to-Day

- Prioritize the Workforce

Learn to Say No

- Define capabilities

- Be introspective

- Identify limitations

- Demand accountability from the federal government

- Focused planning on *the* response not the components

Create a Book of Lists

- Social Worker model

- Interfacing needs with resources

- Creates a "Cafeteria Plan"

- Expertise begets more expertise

Leverage the Private Sector

- Embrace the private sector

- "Private sector" is broad

- Adopt efficient processes and scales of efficiency

- Adaptation is a two-way street

- Compatibility breeds integration

Emphasize the Human in Health & Human Services

- Holistic Approach

- Disasters heighten the need for human services

- Coordinating body

- Political Advocate

Integrate Emergency Response Into the Day-to-Day

- Develop response that are scalable not distinguishable

- Daily operations mirror emergency responses

- Train on the systems you will use

Prioritize the Workforce

- The most critical issue

- Prioritize recruitment, training and retention

- Look for young dedicated idealism

- Do unto others…

- Cross training is imperative

- National standards for public health